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STS 300: The Environment in Context Essay

Equity: Christian and Neoliberal perspectives

Characters: Isaiah the Old Testament prophet and Rodrigo Rato y Figaredo the Chairman of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

I was sitting at home and relaxing in my recliner after a particularly difficult day in Washington. We had finished an arduous general committee meeting on formulating a strategy to engage with criticisms about our policies from Environmentalists. I was just dosing off when a great stream of light roused me to consciousness, I scurried from my chair and was stopped by an awesome sight of an angel like figure.

Rodrigo(R): [whispered] Who are you?

Isaiah (I): Do not be afraid, Rodrigo. My name is Isaiah and I am a prophet of God sent to bring you a message.

R: What does God want with me? How am I responsible to Him?

I: As the head of the IMF, you have a great responsibility to the millions of people that are affected by the impacts of your decisions. You will be held accountable before God for the time you spend in this role because “the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”¹

R: What is the message?

I: The message is about equity and how the Neoliberal economic practices implemented by the IMF, World Bank, and WTO have impacted on the equitable

¹ NIV Bible Luke 12:48 (See appendix for Bible verses that are quoted in the footnotes)

distribution of resources between people and nations as well as the impact on future generations.²

R: The poor and the environment? What do they mean to God and to Christians?

I: God will judge all mankind on their treatment of nature and of the poor.³

R: Well certainly Neoliberal policies must stand in good stead as they engage with God's commandment to subdue the earth.⁴

I: Humanity is a part of God's creation not outside of it.⁵ God's covenant with Man includes the responsibility of caring and loving relationships with nature⁶ and other humans. The deterioration of these relationships is a violation of this covenant. The poverty, oppression, violence, war, as well as the pollution and exploitation of earth's resources are evidence of mankind's rebellion against God as well as a consequence of separation from God.⁷

R: But this is not what I was taught at church when I was young in Spain.

I: I suggest that this is because of the cultural and political objectives of nations to expand their territories and incomes. A narrow interpretation of Genesis 1:28

² Environmental equity encompasses the right to basic needs for all people and the equitable distribution of the earth's resources across the global community. Falk et al. 1993, p2 in Beder, *The Nature of Sustainable Development*, p 145, The lack of Intragenerational equity can result in the exaggeration of environmental problems ie illegal logging as a result of access to natural resources and traditional livelihoods. Inequality within a generation to decision-making processes that affect their environment and their livelihoods can then have an impact on future generations who receive the environment in an inferior condition. Beder p 147

³ Revelation 11:18 Nature and Matthew 25:31-46 The poor

⁴ Genesis 1:28 The verse often cited as depicting the Christian relationship to the environment and responsible for formulating Western attitudes to nature, man as above and separate from nature with a mandate to subdue/ master/ and exploit the land.

⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *The Biblical Vision of The Ecological Crisis*, pp 174-175 She is not arguing that Man is not different to the rest of creation as God makes this distinction Genesis 1:27 as being made in his own image. She does suggest that human and natural history is interdependently linked in the covenant God made. Furthermore, Leviticus 25:23-24 and Psalm 24:1 further emphasises that man does not own nature.

⁶ Genesis 2:15 The Hebrew word used in this verse to describe God's commandment to Adam to take care of the Garden of Eden is 'Shamar' and embodies a loving, caring, nurturing and keeping relationship. Furthermore God sets outlines for how His people are to take care of nature in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 Exodus 23 Leviticus 25. in Dewitt 1994.

Daniel Finn, *Trade and the Environment* p 507 The unsustainable use of earth's resources presents a problem for Christian ethics as it violates respect for the "integrity of God's creation".

⁷ Isaiah 24: 1-6 Outlines the interdependency between man's obedience to God and the relationship to nature. Nature is a part of the "human social drama" the devastation of earth is a direct result of mankind's rebellion as well as a punishment from God.

was used as a justification for their expansion and has since seeped into church doctrine⁸

I: Let me ask you a question, have the policies of economic rationalism implemented over the past 50 years addressed the issue of equity?

R: Well, the restructuring of developing nation's economies helps them to pay off their debt and modernize so their people can enjoy a higher standard of living. Also trade liberalization helps to create the wealth needed to address environmental concerns and the economic benefits also flow on to the poor helping them to improve their situation.⁹

I: Many people criticize economic rationalism policies as causing inequality and poverty and institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and WTO as means of increasing the prosperity, power and influence of Western governments and corporations.¹⁰

R: Policies of economic rationalism are not the major reason for inequality and poverty. There are many complexities, you must consider poor governance and the corruption that is rampant in certain governments.¹¹

I: Trade Liberalisation is also increasingly coming under fire as a race to the bottom for environmental standards and is consequently indicated in environmental degradation.¹²

⁸ My own opinion but Martin Luther King Jr, in *Strength to Love*, 1986, pp21-22 made interesting comments about the church's tendency to conform to majority opinion.

⁹ Arguments for trade liberalization counteracted by Michel Chossodovsky, *Global Poverty in the Late 20th Century*, p 293

¹⁰ Aplin, *Environmental Rationalism and Beyond*, p 279 argues that economical rationalism had been used shrewdly by the West in order to gain power and influence. Michel Chossodovsky, *Op.cit.*, p293 states that income distribution has become increasingly polarized as evidenced by the increase in the United States billionaires from 13 in 1982 to 149 in 1996. The 450 Billionaires worldwide amass a fortune that exceeds the combined GDP of the group of low-income countries with 56% of the world's population.

In the *Globalisation guide*, Why is there global inequality, and is it getting worse, in Healey (ed) *Globalisation, Issues in society*, p 26 Offers statistics of inequalities in wealth distribution over the very active period of integration of developing countries into world economies 1960-1995. The gap in incomes between the 20% of the richest and poorest countries has grown from 30 to 1 in 1960 to 82 to 1 in 1995. By the late 1990s the fifth of the world's people living in the highest income countries had: 86% of world GDP the bottom fifth 1%, 82% of world export markets, the bottom fifth 1%, 68% of direct foreign investment the bottom 1%.

Corpwatch, *Corporate Globalization Fact Sheet 2000*, offers the case study of the impact of the NAFTA (North American Trade Agreement) on Mexico claiming that 75% Mexico's population lives in poverty in 2000, compared with 49 percent in 1981, and that the number of Mexicans living in severe poverty (living on less than \$2 a day) has grown by four million since NAFTA began in 1994.

¹¹ Summary of World Bank arguments in *Globalisation guide*, Why is there global inequality, and is it getting worse, in Healey (ed) *Globalisation, Issues in society*, p 26

¹² Beder, *Op.cit.*, p 189. Environmental and social costs are not internalized in the price of goods produced in competitive markets, consequently producers are rewarded for making these factors externalities.

R: Where trade exacerbates environmental degradation it is because of lax environmental standards and protection measures, it is not the fault of institutions like the WTO but the policy-makers in its member countries.¹³

I: In addition, the removal of 'Non-tariff' barriers to trade, have been seen as a threat to the well being of the environment.¹⁴

R: The WTO puts few restrictions on environmental regulations as long as they are applied fairly and without discrimination to foreign producers.¹⁵ In fact trade liberalization and foreign investment can help to raise environmental quality as access to cleaner technologies become available. Besides as the incomes of the population increase so does the demand for environmental quality.¹⁶

I: Let's see shall we.

In an instant I was surrounded by unfamiliar landmarks, the heat was so intense that my vision became blurred, focusing my eyes I could make out fields of failed crops and watering holes reduced to dustbowl.¹⁷

I: We are in Dir Fakar, a rural community 200km south of Addis Ababa the capital of Ethiopia. It is the year 2002 and drought and food shortages once again threaten famine in this country.¹⁸ I want you to observe the family in the

Resources become depleted which in turn leads to environmental degradation that ultimately affects poorer communities who suffer the burden of local environmental problems. Beder, Ibid p 151

¹³ Eric Neumayer, *The WTO and the Environment*, p 5

¹⁴ Tom Athanasiou, *The second coming of 'Free Trade'*, pp499-500 Such non-tariff trade barriers are human rights and ecological issues. He states that at least 17 international environmental treaties are vulnerable to challenge because they involve limitations to trade.

Corpwatch, *Op.cit.*, also emphasis the WTO's poor environmental record stating that since 1995 all reviews on environmental policies have been deemed as illegal trade barriers with the exception of one ruling. Conversely, many developing nations are critical of efforts of high-income countries to impede trade because of environmental restrictions claiming that these moves are merely protectionism wrapped up as environmentalism. A cynicism that Eric Neumayer, *Op.cit.*, p 7 suggests is rooted in a deeper frustration in the biased distribution of WTO agreements to the richer nations.

¹⁵ Eric Neumayer, *Ibid*, pp1-4. Such as the *1997-1998 Shrimp vs Turtle decision*. "The appellate body ruled that regulations aimed at PPMs in foreign countries need not necessarily violate WTO rules as long as the country imposing the restrictions has undertaken good faith efforts at reaching a multilateral agreement, has applied the restrictions in a fair, non-arbitrary and non-discriminatory manner, giving affected countries some flexibility in how to achieve the aim of natural resource protection." P 2 Also he points out the "No provision contained in a MEA (multilateral environmental agreement) ... has ever been disputed at the WTO" p 4

¹⁶ Summary taken from the *Assessing Globalisation* briefing paper published by the World Bank April 2000 in Healy (ed) *Op.cit.*, pp 33-34 and in WTO, *Environment Backgrounder*, suggests a positive relationship between the reduction of trade barriers and improved environmental quality. Enhanced competition, trade expansion and multilateral negotiations are espoused as the tools to bring about sustainable exploitation of natural resources and improved environmental quality.

¹⁷ Description of Dir Fakar in BBC news report, *Massive famine stalks Ethiopia*, 11/11/2002

¹⁸ BBC news report, *Massive famine stalks Ethiopia*, 11/11/2002, 6 million people were facing starvation.

house over there. Kabede lost 2 children in the 1998-2000 drought because their family could not purchase food. He also lost his mother and father in the drought in 1984 that caused close to 1 million deaths.¹⁹

I stared silently at the emaciated skeleton of the man, beside him his wife nursed a screaming child, with her malnourished stomach protruding. My heart went out to this family, whose would not?

R: Will the child make it?

Isaiah made no reply.

R: Surely God has more to do with the climatic conditions that brought around this drought than the policies of the IMF?

I: These famines have not been the result of grain shortages but the 'bitter economic medicine' imposed on them in the form of Structural Adjustment Programs.^{20 21} There was enough grain being produced to meet consumption needs during the 1998-2000 drought, but grain was being exported to service debt repayments instead of replenishing the country's emergency food stocks.²² US AID in the form of fertilizers has also exacerbated the situation and GMO seeds have replaced traditional seeds, reducing biodiversity, dilapidating the land and creating greater dependency on foreign aid.²³

I: I have another place I wish to show you.

A sad scene materialized before me, we were standing in a cemetery and a family was gathered mourning their loved one.

¹⁹ Michel Chossudovsky, The real cause of famine in Ethiopia, *The Ecologist*, p 26

²⁰ Michel Chossudovsky, *Ibid* p 26

²¹ Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP's) have been critically seen as protecting the banking interests of wealthy nations ensuring that questionable loans are paid. (Kevin Danaher, Seven arguments for reforming the world economy, p 29) A country is required to employ economic rationalization (neoliberal) practices of cutting welfare spending including health and education, privatise state owned companies and services, decrease domestic consumption and produce cash crops for exports so that more hard currency can be earned in order to pay debts, lower wages, remove restrictions on foreign investment, lower barriers to imports, devalue the local currency, raise interest rates and cut subsidies for local industries. Bello in Beder p 182 and Corp Watch, Corporate Globalization Fact Sheet, 2001. Interestingly Kevin Danaher also points out that wealthy countries such as the USA, Japan, Germany, England, France and the recent success stories such as Taiwan and South Korea did not use this model for their economic development, Instead they used a "heavily state-interventionist model that had government play a strong role in directing investment, managing trade and subsidising chosen sectors of the economy."

²² Michel Chossudovsky, *Op.cit.*, p 27 The amount exported in 1996 was one million tonnes an amount amply sufficient to have supplied the 1999/2000 emergency. In 2000 in Amhara and Oromiya 2.8 million people and 1.6 million people faced starvation in these areas when the regions had produced 500 000 and 600 000 surplus tonnes of grains respectively.

²³ Michel Chossudovsky, *Ibid*, pp28-29

R: Where are we?

I: We are in Bhatinda in the province of Punjab. This was once a fertile and productive agricultural area in India. Prosperity has been replaced with debt and despair.²⁴

R: Whom are they mourning?

I: A 25 year old man named Betavati Ratan who took his own life because he could not pay the debt borrowed for a deep tube well on his farm. The well had dried up. Sadly there have been many suicides in this region and in others around India.²⁵

R: This is horrifying!

I: The region has been affected by the economic reforms of the Indian government; consequently ground water has been used to irrigate thirsty cash crops for the export market. The hybrid seeds used have required fertilizers that have further dilapidated the land.²⁶

R: But to take your life seems extreme?

I: Certainly, but the situation is desperate for many of the rural farmers in countries where Structural Adjustment programs exist. Farmers have become vulnerable because the cash crops they produce are at the mercy of instable commodity prices often depressed because of agricultural subsidies in high-income nations. Cheap imports also reduce prices for their crops in the domestic market. Their currencies have been devalued and their production costs have increased with more industrialized farming methods.²⁷

Intellectual property rights is an issue that is no longer removed from daily rural life in India because many native seeds are being patented for example Basmati Rice by a US Corporation. It is an example of a phenomenon that is increasingly occurring throughout the world where indigenous knowledge is being turned into the property of global corporations and the poor are being made to pay for it.²⁸

²⁴ Vandana Shiva, Poverty and Globalisation Lecture, 2000

²⁵ Shiva, Ibid. The regions were facing a water famine, in Gujarat and Rajasthan alone 50 million people are affected.

²⁶ Shiva, Ibid. Spending on pesticides in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh has shot up 2000 per cent from \$2.5 million in the 1980s to \$50 million in 1997 as sterile GMO cotton seeds have been introduced to this region, promising high yields and high returns in the export market.

²⁷ Shiva, Ibid and John Madeley The Impact of Trade Liberalisation on Food Security and Poverty and Durning 1990 in Beder p 169 The World Bank estimates that each year trade barriers cost low-income countries \$US80-\$US100 billion in lost sales and reduced prices.

²⁸ Shiva, Ibid. Rice Tec, a U.S. based company has been granted Patent no. 5,663,484 for basmati rice lines and grains.

R: But our policies are implemented for long-term economic growth surely these are just short-term issues.²⁹

I: There are millions of people without access to adequate food supply. It does not seem that after 50 years of economic policies implemented by the World Bank and the IMF that social and environmental problems have improved.³⁰

R: It is certainly a lot easier to dismiss such collateral damage on paper than to see just a small part of it face to face. So where to from here?

I: It is futile to think that human ingenuity will be able to overcome the destruction of nature that exists.³¹

R: Is it at all in our power to restore nature?

I: God has provided hope and redemption for nature and the poor likewise. It is in the power of mankind to restore the land by rectifying the covenant and mending their relationship with God.³² When just relations are restored between people, "peaceful, harmonious and beautiful natural environments will be restored."³³

In Ethiopia it has been estimated that US Corporations earn \$150 million annually on the sale of varieties of Barley developed from Ethiopian strains. Instead of receiving compensation farmers in the third world receive bills for the use of these seeds. Rural Advancement Foundation (RAFI) in Chossudovsky, Op.cit. p 30

Farhana Yamin, International Relations and the Environment, p 491

²⁹ IMF, Common Criticisms of the IMF: Some Responses, March 25, 2005.

³⁰ According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1997, 777million people in developing countries do not have access to sufficient food. 25 000 people die each day from hunger. UN Fact Sheet on Food Supply <http://www.un.org/>

³¹ Maurice Hamel, The cure for our fallen world, From a creationist point of view where everything was created in its completeness we can see the futility in the idea that humans can fix the damage they have caused to this planet, that the damage has gone beyond nature's ability to restore itself. If we are left on our own devices all is lost, but God presents hope. He also points out that faith in other gods ie technology, education, evolutionary process is further rebellion against God's covenant.

³² 2 Chron 7:14 God provides a way for the land to be restored. An example of such a restoration can be found in Almolonga, Guatemala where from the late 1970s to late 1990s a revival took place. The once poor, destitute, inebriated and idolatrous community has come a life in a miraculous way. Just and peaceful relationships have been restored in the community. In 1970 the town had 4 prisons, in 1994 the last prison was closed. Transformation has occurred in the natural environment, once arid, unproductive land is producing food of biblical proportions, in the markets you can find "five-pound beets, carrots larger than your arm and cabbages the size of oversized basketballs". The community used to export 4 truckloads of produce per month they are currently exporting 40 truckloads a day. Transformations story by George Otis Jr reported in Maurice Hamel, Restoring the Fruitfulness of the Land.

³³ Rosemary Radford Reuther, Op.cit., p 175 As outlined in Isaiah 34:1-2, Joel 2: 22-24 Amos 9:13 and ultimately in Isaiah 65:17-25, Revelations 22.

R: But cannot God just restore nature Himself? Why has he allowed this suffering?

I: God has allowed these things to continue so that His children will turn back to him.³⁴ Do not worry for He is profligate in His promise to revitalize nature and restore His place as the provider and nurturer of nature.³⁵

R: Does this mean that there are no other actions I should take?

I: No, you are still a steward of this planet and as such you are responsible for your share of restoring just relationships between people, and people and nature.³⁶ The current trading and economic systems are unsustainable for the environment and for development to occur in developing countries. The responsibility lies with those who have much to rectify the situation.

R: A complete overhaul is not viable and curtailing the profits of the wealthiest benefactors will not be popular.

I: It is true that you will have a very hard road ahead of you. Despite it being an unpopular option the directions that you need to take will require the abandonment of the strict Neoliberal doctrine of unrestricted trade. Always remember God is resolute in His punishment to those who trade in the market place with dishonest scales.³⁷

R: Well, I have been fielding many calls for fair trade³⁸ so it would seem that I should investigate these options. I was also present for Kofi Annan's address to the World Economic Forum calling for greater accountability in achieving a just multilateral trading system.³⁹ Both will require greater interference in trade by

³⁴ Maurice Hamal, Restoring the Fruitfulness of the Land, suggests that the present state of nature and misery, apart from being part of the punishment of separation from God has also been allowed in order to discipline us and cause us to end our rebellion against Him. Romans 8:28, Romans 8:19-21

³⁵ Psalm 104: 10-13

³⁶ Micah 6:8 and Proverbs 31:8-9

³⁷ Amos 8

³⁸ Redden, A fairer global trading system is vital for the poor, pp3-7 Argues for a fairer multilateral trading system, the democratization and transparency of the WTO in order to challenge the protectionism of TNC and wealthy countries who currently have monopolies on the world's natural resources. That when coupled with effective aid, debt relief, income redistribution and good governance policies a more just trading system can play a vital role in reducing poverty. He cites World Bank estimates of potential gain from the latest Doha round of negotiations, an increase of \$300 billion of which \$160 billion would go to developing nations, as having the potential to make a real difference and to reach the Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty.

³⁹ Kofi Annan, Address to the World Economic Forum, 31/01/1999, called on corporations to take an active role in directly promoting just and humane orientated markets instead of one that is driven by short term profits and that the fate of the losers in the current system has been ignored too long and at great cost. Corpwatch, UN: Annan Says Only Open Markets Can Ease World Poverty, Kofi Anann is reported as saying that open markets "offer the only realistic hope of pulling billions of people in developing countries

international governments and regulating institutions in order to achieve equity for current and future generations.

I: Also, it would appear that debt relief is needed in many heavily indebted countries and will help to save the lives of millions of people.⁴⁰ Will you consider debt relief for your debtors?

R: Up until recently the IMF has not considered Debt Relief as a sound policy option, but we have already had success in this area as 26 countries have had their external debt cut by two thirds. We do not see this option as an end in itself but it should be a component of a comprehensive approach that includes "policies that promote sustained growth, poverty reduction, and external viability"⁴¹

I: Rodrigo you have the potential to bring about huge change to the equity of social and natural environments. Do not waste the opportunity given to you by God.

R: I do not intend to waste this opportunity. I will endeavour to be a good steward of the time given to me by God and consent to being a tool for Him to bring about his prophetic plan for His creation.

I: I must leave you now as I have a couple of more visits to make tonight.

R: Isaiah, do I know the people you will visit?

I: Yes I will be visiting with Paul and Pascal.⁴²

When I woke up the next morning I felt bewildered. Was it all a dream? No, I felt empowered and impassioned to go forth and attempt to change the world. My first step involved being on my knees in thanksgiving and supplication and mending my relationship to the only One that can make this all possible.

out of abject poverty, while sustaining prosperity in the industrialised world" but that it needs to have foundations that are reflect global social needs and is committed to sharing the benefits of globalisation.

⁴⁰ Christian Aid, Who owes who?, The UN suggests that 7 million children's lives could be saved each year as a result of debt relief for unpayable debts.

Accion Ecologica, No more plunder, they owe us ecological debt!, Espouse the idea that most foreign debts are illegitimate and calls for developing countries to shut off the tap. They also argue that there is a much greater ecological debt that is owed to these developing countries for the exploitation of their natural resources. See Friends of the Earth Ecological debts statement.

Christian Aid, Op.cit., claim that for climate change alone Highly indebted poor countries (HIPCs) have carbon credits owed to them by the G7 nations of three times the conventional debts of HIPCs that currently stand at \$200 billion.

⁴¹ IMF, Op.cit..

⁴² Paul Wolfowitz the President of the World Bank and Pascal Lamy the head of the WTO.

Appendix: Scripture References

Revelation 11:18

The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great- and for those who destroy the earth.

Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. (32) All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

(33) He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

(34) “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, (36) I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’

(37) “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? (38) When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? (39) When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

(40) “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.’

(41) “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (42) For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, (43) I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me’

(44) “The will also answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’

(45) “He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’

(46) Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Genesis 2: 15

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

2 Chron 7:14

“if my people, who are recalled by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land”

Isaiah 35:1-2

The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom,
Like the crocus, (2) it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy...

Joel 2:22-24

Be not afraid, O wild animals,
For the open pastures are becoming green.
The trees are bearing fruit;
The fig tree and the vine yield their riches.
(23) Be glad, O people of Zion,
rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given you
the autumn and spring rains, as before.
(24) The threshing floors will be filled with grain;
the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.

Amos 9:13

“The days are coming” declares the Lord,
“When the reaper will be overtaken by the plowman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from all the hills

Romans 8:19-21

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. (20) For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

Leviticus 25:1-7

The Lord said to Moses on Mount Sinai, (2) “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a Sabbath to the Lord. (3) For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. (4) But in the seventh year the land is to have a Sabbath of rest, a Sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. (5) Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. (6) Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you- for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, (7) as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

Leviticus 25:23-24

“The Land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. (24) Throughout the country that you hold as possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.”

Psalm 24:1

The Earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.

Isaiah 24:1-6

See, the Lord is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it;
He will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants...

(3) The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The lord has spoken this word.

(4) The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers the exalted of the earth languish.

(5) The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.

(6) Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt.

Psalm 104:10-13

"He makes springs pour water into the ravines; it flows between the mountains. They give water to all the beasts of the field; the wild donkeys quench their thirst. The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among its branches. He waters the mountains from his upper chambers; the earth is satisfied by the fruit of his work."

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Micah 6:8

He has showed you, O man, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Proverbs 31:8-9

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. (9) Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy."

Isaiah 65:17-25

New Heavens and a New Earth

- ¹⁷ "Behold, I will create
new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered,
nor will they come to mind.
- ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight
and its people a joy.
- ¹⁹ I will rejoice over Jerusalem
and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying
will be heard in it no more.
- ²⁰ "Never again will there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not live out his years;
he who dies at a hundred
will be thought a mere youth;
he who fails to reach ^[a] a hundred
will be considered accursed.
- ²¹ They will build houses and dwell in them;
they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- ²² No longer will they build houses and others live in them,
or plant and others eat.
For as the days of a tree,
so will be the days of my people;
my chosen ones will long enjoy
the works of their hands.
- ²³ They will not toil in vain
or bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the LORD,
they and their descendants with them.
- ²⁴ Before they call I will answer;
while they are still speaking I will hear.
- ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
but dust will be the serpent's food.
They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,"
says the LORD.

Amos 8

A Basket of Ripe Fruit

¹ This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. ² "What do you see, Amos?" he asked.

"A basket of ripe fruit," I answered.

Then the LORD said to me, "The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.

³ "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. ^[a] Many, many bodies—flung everywhere! Silence!"

⁴ Hear this, you who trample the needy
and do away with the poor of the land,

⁵ saying,
"When will the New Moon be over
that we may sell grain,
and the Sabbath be ended
that we may market wheat?"—
skimping the measure,
boosting the price
and cheating with dishonest scales,

⁶ buying the poor with silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
selling even the sweepings with the wheat.

⁷ The LORD has sworn by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done.

⁸ "Will not the land tremble for this,
and all who live in it mourn?
The whole land will rise like the Nile;
it will be stirred up and then sink
like the river of Egypt.

⁹ "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD,
"I will make the sun go down at noon
and darken the earth in broad daylight.

¹⁰ I will turn your religious feasts into mourning
and all your singing into weeping.
I will make all of you wear sackcloth

and shave your heads.
I will make that time like mourning for an only son
and the end of it like a bitter day.

¹¹ "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD,
"when I will send a famine through the land—
not a famine of food or a thirst for water,
but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.

¹² Men will stagger from sea to sea
and wander from north to east,
searching for the word of the LORD,
but they will not find it.

¹³ "In that day
"the lovely young women and strong young men
will faint because of thirst.

¹⁴ They who swear by the shame ^[b] of Samaria,
or say, 'As surely as your god lives, O Dan,'
or, 'As surely as the god ^[c] of Beersheba lives'—
they will fall,
never to rise again."

Leviticus 25: 8-54

The Year of Jubilee ⁸ " 'Count off seven sabbaths of years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹ Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰ Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. ¹¹ The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

¹³ " 'In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property.

¹⁴ " 'If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other. ¹⁵ You are to buy from your countryman on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And he is to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. ¹⁶ When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what he is really selling you is the number of crops. ¹⁷ Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

¹⁸ " 'Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. ¹⁹ Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. ²⁰ You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" ²¹ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. ²² While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

²³ " 'The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. ²⁴ Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

²⁵ " 'If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. ²⁶ If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, ²⁷ he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property. ²⁸ But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.

²⁹ " 'If a man sells a house in a walled city, he retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time he may redeem it. ³⁰ If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and his descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. ³¹ But houses in villages without walls

around them are to be considered as open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee.

³² " 'The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. ³³ So the property of the Levites is redeemable—that is, a house sold in any town they hold—and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. ³⁴ But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession.

³⁵ " 'If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. ³⁶ Do not take interest of any kind [a] from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. ³⁷ You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. ³⁸ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

³⁹ " 'If one of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave. ⁴⁰ He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you; he is to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ Then he and his children are to be released, and he will go back to his own clan and to the property of his forefathers. ⁴² Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. ⁴³ Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God.

⁴⁴ " 'Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. ⁴⁵ You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. ⁴⁶ You can will them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.

⁴⁷ " 'If an alien or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the alien living among you or to a member of the alien's clan, ⁴⁸ he retains the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his relatives may redeem him: ⁴⁹ An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in his clan may redeem him. Or if he prospers, he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰ He and his buyer are to count the time from the year he sold himself up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for his release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired man for that number of years. ⁵¹ If many years remain, he must pay for his redemption a larger share of the price paid for him. ⁵² If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he is to compute that and pay for his redemption accordingly. ⁵³ He is to be treated as a man hired from year to year; you must see to it that his owner does not rule over him ruthlessly.

⁵⁴ " 'Even if he is not redeemed in any of these ways, he and his children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee,

Exodus 20

The Ten Commandments

¹ And God spoke all these words:

² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

³ "You shall have no other gods before ^[a] me.

⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

¹² "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ "You shall not murder.

¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ "You shall not steal.

¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."

²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning."

²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

Idols and Altars

²² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites this: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: ²³ Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.'

²⁴ " 'Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, ²⁵ your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵ If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. ²⁶ And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.'

Exodus 23

Laws of Justice and Mercy

¹ "Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.

² "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd,³ and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.

⁴ "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him.⁵ If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.

⁶ "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits.⁷ Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

⁸ "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.

⁹ "Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.

Sabbath Laws

¹⁰ "For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops,¹¹ but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

¹² "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed.

¹³ "Be careful to do everything I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.

The Three Annual Festivals

¹⁴ "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me.

¹⁵ "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt.

"No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

¹⁶ "Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field.
"Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.

¹⁷ "Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD.

¹⁸ "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast.
"The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning.

¹⁹ "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.
"Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

God's Angel to Prepare the Way

²⁰ "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. ²¹ Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. ²² If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. ²³ My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. ²⁴ Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. ²⁵ Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, ²⁶ and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.

²⁷ "I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. ²⁸ I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. ²⁹ But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.

³¹ "I will establish your borders from the Red Sea ^[a] to the Sea of the Philistines, ^[b] and from the desert to the River. ^[c] I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you. ³² Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. ³³ Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you."

Deuteronomy 5

The Ten Commandments

¹ Moses summoned all Israel and said:

Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. ² The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³ It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. ⁴ The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. ⁵ (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

⁶ "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

⁷ "You shall have no other gods before ^[a] me.

⁸ "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

¹² "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

¹⁶ "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁷ "You shall not murder.

¹⁸ "You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁹ "You shall not steal.

²⁰ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

²¹ "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

²² These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

²³ When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. ²⁴ And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. ²⁵ But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. ²⁶ For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? ²⁷ Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey."

²⁸ The LORD heard you when you spoke to me and the LORD said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. ²⁹ Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

³⁰ "Go, tell them to return to their tents. ³¹ But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess."

³² So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³ Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

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